

# **Request for Initial Proposals (RFIP) for Continued Operation of the Metal Finishing, Paints and Coatings, and Printed Wiring Board Manufacturing Compliance Assistance Centers**

## **I. Summary**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has funded the development and operation of ten Compliance Assistance Centers (Centers) to help small and medium size businesses and local governments better understand and comply with environmental regulations. EPA seeks to partner with an eligible recipient meeting certain legal and programmatic criteria to continue operation and maintenance of the compliance assistance centers for metal finishing, paint and coatings and printed wiring board manufacturing. This request for an initial proposal (RFIP) solicits applications from non-profit organizations and from universities. To be considered, initial proposals meeting the criteria described below must be delivered to EPA by 5:00 P.M., May 23, 2003. In the second step, or Request for Final Proposal (RFP), EPA will invite all applicants whose initial proposals met the threshold criteria to submit a more detailed proposal for the operation and maintenance of the metal finishing, paint and coatings and printed wiring board manufacturing compliance assistance center. The Agency will award a cooperative agreement to the applicant whose detailed proposal is ranked highest by EPA management.

The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number and title for this project is # 66.305, Compliance Assistance Support for Services to the Regulated Community and other Assistance Providers. (See the web-site at [www.cfda.gov](http://www.cfda.gov)) An estimate of the Federal funds available for this award is \$600,000 over a 5-year period. EPA will initially fund on a one year basis and will consider funding the balance of the yearly budget requests contingent upon satisfactory progress as certified by the EPA Project Officer, the availability of funds, and EPA priorities.

## **II. Background**

The purpose of the RFIP is to solicit applications from non-profit organizations and universities to operate and maintain the following national compliance assistance centers: the National Metal Finishing Resource Center (NMFRC), The Paint and Coatings Resource Center (PCRC) and the Printed Wiring Board Resource Center (PMBRC) and to provide outreach, networking and measurement support for all of the EPA sponsored Compliance Assistance Centers (Center). The NMFRC, PCRC, and PWBRC were funded by a cooperative agreement with the National Center for Manufacturing Sciences (NCMS) that expires in December 2003. Under the Grants Competition Policy that went into effect October 1, 2002, EPA now competes any assistance agreement that will provide the recipient more than \$75,000 in a year.

The NMFRC, PCRC and PWBRC are intended as a “first-stop shop” that provide

environmental technical and regulatory information, environmental management, and pollution prevention information. The center's environmental compliance information, tools, and services must be easy to read, easy to use, and tailored specifically to the environmental aspects of metal finishers, paint and coating facilities and the printed wiring board manufacturing industry.

To achieve this goal, the recipient must:

- Create Internet linkages and partnerships with the various metal finishing, paint and coating and the printed wiring board manufacturing industry groups/associations, EPA and other federal regulatory agencies, other relevant organizations, and the compliance assistance provider communities.
- Develop content (including, regulatory and pollution prevention information) that will address the needs of the compliance assistance center users.
- Market the Centers to their intended audiences through Internet marketing, design enhancements and other Internet integration techniques.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Centers.
- Work with the ten Centers to continue to foster communication among the Centers' cooperative agreement recipients and a sharing of tools among the Centers.

EPA helped establish the NMFRC, PCRC and PWBRC and the seven other compliance assistance centers by sponsoring partnerships with industry, academics, stakeholder organizations, environmental groups, and other Agencies. The centers provide comprehensive, easy to understand, sector-specific compliance information, tools, and services. The web-sites, and their associated list serves and "Ask the Expert" features, make it easier for industry to learn about, understand, and comply with the environmental requirements that apply to their operations.

As stated above, the assistance agreement with NCMS expires in December 2003. In accordance with EPA policy encouraging competition for assistance agreements, the Agency now seeks proposals from qualified applicants who can partner with the EPA, and other interested parties and who have the capability both to support the continued operation and maintenance of the NMFRC, PCRC and PWBRC and to support marketing, networking, and measurement activities that will support all EPA sponsored Centers.

In general, the centers provide comprehensive, easy to understand sector-specific compliance information. The centers offer a variety of services, including web-sites, e-mail groups, and fax-back systems depending on the needs of the sector they are designed for. All the centers help businesses, tribes, local governments, and federal agencies identify specific regulations that apply to their activities,

improve compliance with environmental regulations, and learn about pollution prevention approaches that can save money and resources. All Centers can be accessed at [www.assistancecenters.net](http://www.assistancecenters.net)

### **III. Purpose of the NMFRC, PCRC, PWBRC**

The NMFRC, PCRC and PWBRC provide information, tools, and services that facilitate environmental compliance, pollution prevention, and environmental management systems. The web-sites also provide regulatory updates, expert answers to environmental questions, a fax-back service, a vendor directory, and links to other services and sources of environmental information. Working with its partners and EPA, the web-sites provide the most up-to-date environmental information to their users. Environmental compliance information is made available in its original form and in plain-language versions.

The development of the NMFRC, PCRC and PWBRC was made possible in part through the financial resources of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. These resources allowed NCMS to bring environmental compliance information to metal finishers, paint and coating facilities, the printed wiring board industry, and the public through the web-site, fact sheets, news updates, calendar of events, and other documents on the web-site.

### **IV. Technical Components of the NMFRC, PCRC, and PWBRC**

The NMFRC, PCRC and PWBRC currently use the software “Cold Fusion”. It has a minimum amount of broad band demand to promote quick loading. It has been tested for use on Internet Explorer as well as Netscape. This information is provided for informational purposes only. Applicants can propose alternative approaches to carrying out the objectives of the center.

### **V. Applicant Eligibility**

Applicants must be a nonprofit organization as that term is defined in Section 4(6) of the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999, Public Law 96-107, 31 U.S.C. 6101 Note. Colleges, universities, and community colleges are eligible to apply. However, nonprofit organizations as described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply. In addition, for profit organizations are not eligible to apply.

Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs is not applicable to this request for an initial proposal.

### **VI. Required Application and Threshold Criteria Information**

There is no standard governmental form for interested parties to use when submitting their initial

proposal. The prospective grantee must include the following general information.

- Name of Organization
- Description of Organization (associated members, if any, purpose/function of the organization)
- Address, City, State and Zip
- Telephone and Facsimile Number
- Responsible Official with email address

Eligible and interested parties are invited to provide EPA with verifiable documentation indicating how their organization meets **all** of the following threshold criteria:

- Applicant can demonstrate that it has a financial management and time management system in place that meets the requirements in the applicable OMB Circular (A-21 for Universities and A-122 for non profit organizations).
- Applicant can demonstrate that an indirect cost rate has been approved by a federal agency or has an approved cost allocation system that meets the requirements in the applicable OMB Circular.
- Applicant can demonstrate a previous working relationship(s) with experts and national organizations for metal finishers, paint and coating facilities, and the printed wiring board industry.
- Applicant can demonstrate an understanding of the environmental needs of metal finishers, paint and coating facilities, and the printed wiring board industry.
- Applicant has the hardware and web-based expertise to manage the metal finishing, paint and coatings and printed wiring board manufacturing compliance assistance centers.
- Applicant can demonstrate previous experience in developing and maintaining web-based services.

Response to these six criteria should be no greater than ten (10) pages. The RFIP must be delivered to EPA by 5:00 P.M., May 23, 2003. Applicants must clearly mark any data that the applicant considers being Confidential Business Information (CBI). If necessary, EPA will make final confidential business information determinations under 40 CFR Part 2, Subpart B.

## **VII. Pre-application Assistance**

Eligible and interested applicants may contact Joseph Hall with questions regarding eligibility and threshold criteria. The Agency will post answers to significant or frequently asked questions on <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/assistance/centers/index.html>. Applicants are encouraged to review these questions and answers prior to submitting their initial proposals.

## **VIII. Evaluation Process.**

An EPA evaluation panel will review the initial proposals on a “pass/fail” basis and make recommendations to senior management in the Office of Compliance. Applicants must meet the eligibility of **all** six threshold criteria to be invited to submit a more detailed final proposal. The EPA will notify both successful and unsuccessful applicants of the RFIP.

All successful applicants that met the threshold criteria will be requested to submit a more detailed final proposal for the maintenance and operation of the metal finishing, paint and coatings and printed wiring board manufacturing compliance assistance centers. The Agency will award a cooperative agreement to the applicant whose final proposal best meets the criteria as set out in the Request for Final Proposal. The Request for Final Proposal package can be found at:  
<http://www.epa.gov/compliance/assistance/centers/index.html>

## **IX. Initial Proposal Submission**

Interested applicants can submit their application package by mail, email, or facsimile no later than 5:00 P.M., May 23, 2003 to:

Joseph Hall (2224A)  
US Environmental Protection Agency  
Office of Compliance  
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20460

Information submitted to address the six threshold criteria should not exceed ten (10) total pages. Applicants meeting all criteria will be invited to submit a proposal for management and operation of the metal finishing, paint and coatings and printed wiring board manufacturing compliance assistance centers. The EPA expects to notify all applicants of their eligibility to continue onto the final proposal by June 18, 2003. Any disputes that arise during the selection process will be resolved in accordance with 40 CFR 330.63 and Part 31, subpart F. (See web-site at <http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/index.html>.) EPA reserves the right to reject all proposals or applications and make no award.